

Summary : Healthcare Reform under the New Japanese Government from a Comparative Perspective

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The purpose of my study was to analyze healthcare reform under the new Japanese government from a comparative perspective. Today, like many developed nations in the world, Japan is facing a variety of serious healthcare problems in the face of an increasingly aging society as well as austere economic conditions. Under these circumstances, public opinion demanding healthcare reforms is growing stronger year by year. In Japan, as in other nations, the healthcare reform issue has become one of the top priorities in government policy. This study attempted to analyze healthcare reform in Japan under the new government that was established in September 2009 after the general election. An attempt was made to compare Japan's reforms with those of other developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom.

Firstly, this study examined some of the acute problems of the healthcare system in Japan, including care for the elderly in the context of a rapidly aging society. There are a host of other problems such as the shortage of medical doctors and nursing care workers, the rise in national medical expenditures as well as individual medical expenses, lowered standards and inefficiency in medical services, regional and income gaps in medical care, and various types of medical mal-

practice, to name just a few.

Second, the author examined how the power shift from the long-entrenched LDP government to the new coalition government has affected healthcare reform. The new government has been screening some of the old policies and proposing new policy alternatives, a process that is now in progress. Policy alternatives among major political parties as expressed in the last general election's party manifestos and platforms were analyzed. In addition, public opinion polls relating to healthcare reforms were examined.

In conclusion, the author attempted to delineate the future directions and pending issues in healthcare reform in Japan and to analyze them from the perspective of comparison with other developed nations.